

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC → Charles L. Holstein House

AND/OR COMMON

James Whitcomb Riley House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

528 Lockerbie Street

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Multiple

STATE

Indiana

CODE

18

COUNTY

Marion

CODE

097

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME James Whitcomb Riley Memorial Association

STREET & NUMBER

129 East Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Marion County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

East Washington Street & N. Delaware Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE

Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1973

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT ☐ DETERIORATED
☐ GOOD ☐ RUINS
☐ FAIR ☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James Whitcomb Riley home is basically unaltered in physical structure since the poet lived here between 1893 and 1916. The house is a two-story Victorian type building with solid brick walls, a stone foundation and slate roof. It has a full basement. During the time of Riley's occupancy water from cisterns in the back yard was pumped to tanks in the attic for use throughout the house. The house was built in 1872.

The interior woodwork of the home is all solid hardwoods, handcarved. The original lighting was by gas; the chandeliers have been converted to electricity. The stairwell balustrade is continuous from the first floor to the attic. An unusual "rose" window is located on the stair landing and overlooks the side porch. Speaking tubes are located in the upstairs hallway which were used for communication with the household staff in the kitchen. A long entrance hall, drawing room, library, dining room, second dining room and kitchen comprised the first floor. The upstairs has a continuing hall from which extend five bedrooms and the bathroom.

Alterations in the house consist of the transformation of the second dining room, kitchen, serving pantry and butlers pantry into an apartment for the caretaker, and the making of one of the large hall clothes closets into a public restroom. There are no major exterior alterations.

There are a number of interesting pieces of furniture which are the same as were originally in the house when the owner, Mrs. Charles L. Holstein, died. These furnishings were bought by the James Whitcomb Riley Association from the housekeeper, Miss Katie Kendell, who had received them by will from Mrs. Holstein.

In the Drawing Room, just to the east of the entrance hall, are a number of interesting pieces. Gold leaf cornices top elegant draperies. There is an Italian marble fireplace against the east wall and an elaborate crystal chandelier. A pier mirror, approximately 13 feet high, stands beside the north wall. Beside this mirror is an old Victrola to which belong a collection of original Riley recordings of his poems. There is also in this room one of the first electric player pianos. Across the hallway is the library in which are located a number of rare books, some as much as 300 years old. Here too is an Italian marble fireplace as well as portraits of the owners of the house.

Probably the most elegant room in the house, the formal dining room, has walls which are covered with leather ditto. Here is located original Tiffany silverware used by Riley and the Holsteins. There is the original dining room furnishings with table that extends to accomodate twelve. There is matching sideboard, handcarved.

On the second floor are a number of bedrooms. The most interesting of these is the bedroom of Mr. Riley, the Master Bedroom, with study and the bathroom with cherry woodwork and copper tub. In Mr. Riley's bedroom are the personal belongings of the poet. There are drawers along the baseboard in which the author kept his shoes. Whereas the woodwork on the first floor is finished oak, the second floor is exclusively butternut. The only telephone in the house is in the master bedroom.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

James Whitcomb Riley was primarily a poet of the people. Perhaps he might be better characterized as one who wrote verse. He is not generally considered in the category of Poe or Whitman and he did not intend that his verse be so considered. He was nevertheless not only a fine writer in the American vernacular but a splendid speaker on the subjects with which he was familiar. The sophisticated American public during this period was accustomed to brilliant performances on the lecturers platform and no less a critic than Mark Twain considered a performance of Riley as "about the funniest thing I ever listened to."¹

In this house at 528 Lockerbie Street James Whitcomb Riley spent the last 23 years of his life as a paying guest of Major and Mrs. Charles L. Holstein. He shared the household expenses and many items in the house were purchased by him. In this house Riley wrote some of his later verses and many famous people came to call and enjoy talking to him. He died here on July 22, 1916.

Biography

James Whitcomb Riley, known as the "Hoosier Poet," was born in Greenfield, Indiana to Reuben A. and Elizabeth Marine Riley. Young James spent the early years of his life in Greenfield. His formal education began at home where he acquired a skill at making rhymes for his mother. In school his favorite texts were the McGuffey Readers. A teacher, Mr. Lee O. Harris, seeing that Riley had no real interest in mathematics nor science, introduced him to some of the world's literary masterpieces. The first book Riley remembered buying was Divine Embers by Quarles.

Living in Greenfield, the county seat, provided Riley an opportunity to visit the County Courthouse, where he gained both an insight into country humor and also a vast storehouse of materials he would later incorporate into his works. At the age of sixteen Riley left school and never had any other formal training. Having some talent as an artist, he took up the brush and easel. However, after banding together with two other youths, houses, signs and fences were their only work. For two years Riley traveled about Indiana. Making no money, Riley returned to Greenfield where he became editor of the local paper, which shifted ownership shortly after his arrival. Wanting to be an actor during these early days, he began to write verses and had some of these published. It was while writing for the Anderson Democrat that Riley reached a degree of national recognition. Convinced that

¹Quoted in National Historic Landmark Inventory Form for the James Whitcomb Riley House.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dictionary of American Biography.

Nicholson, Meredith. The Hoosiers (Indianapolis, 1900).

James Whitcomb Riley Man of Letters (Riley Memorial Association, Indianapolis, 1973)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 574280 4402540
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

At a point approximately 100' from the intersection of Park Avenue and Lockerbie Street, proceed west along the northern curb of Lockerbie Street for 170' to a point, thence north for 130' to a point, thence 170' east to a point, thence south 130' to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose the house within its lot boundaries. (See sketch map and site plan)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joseph S. Mendinghall, Historian (Original form completed by S. S. Bradford)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service-Historic Sites Survey

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Landmark

Designated: DEC. 7, 1962

TITLE

DATE

George T. Mendenhall 8/2/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Date

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

8/16/77

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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James Whitcomb
CONTINUATION SHEET Riley House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

what was necessary for success was a "genius known to fame,"² he composed some verse called "Leonainie" in the style of Poe which was published in the Kokomo Dispatch. The overwhelming success prompted scholars and bookcollectors to press the editors for evidence of the original manuscript.

Moving to Indianapolis Riley went to work for the Indianapolis Journal (1877-85). It was during this period the author received his first real success with the series "Benjamin F. Johnson of Boone." These series of poems were published in 1883 under the title of the "Old Swimmin' Hole" and "'Leven More Poems." Finding no sponsor for the book, 1000 copies were finally published by George C. Hott of the Journal at a total profit of only \$166.40. However, its popularity lead to republishing by Merrill, Meigs and Company. Among Mr. Riley's long list of books are Afterwhiles (1887), Pipes o' Pan at Zekesbury (1888), Old Fashion Roses (London-1888), Rhymes of Childhood (1890), Green Fields and Running Brooks (1892), Poems Here at Home (1893), Riley Child Rhymes (1899), and Book of Joyous Children (1902).

The last years of Riley's life were spent with many honors and much recognition. His use of the dialect gave him a lasting place in the annals of America's great literary figures. Riley died in Indianapolis on July 22, 1916.

²Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 15, p. 611.